

Save Me

Story: Save Me

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Summary: "There's a little girl inside of you. She's trapped behind the walls you've thrown up, she's screaming 'save me.'" AU, rated T for dark themes. {FeMu x Gaius}

***Chapter 1*: the avatar of an ancient god**

AN: ugh I'm not sure where to put this. It's much too long for Chiaroscuro...and I want to post it because I like it too much to waste it? Kinda moot I guess because no one really notices the things I don't put in Chiaroscuro anyway. Whatever~this will hopefully be three chapters of this size. I used Reflet because it's what I named my avatar and it's the Japanese name, I think? Btw if anyone thinks it should be M, tell me. I'm kinda worried, but perhaps I'm just a wimp?

to explain, this is basically my headcanon...in which the avatar slowly remembers her past, and becomes kind of messed up because of it. These poor characters. I abuse them so.

Warning: T for blood, dark themes, battle, and character death.

Reflet moved lithely through battle, no movements wasted. Every strike she made, a valmese went down, clutching at whatever gaping wound she'd left them with. Normally, she would be a little reserved. These were humans, after all, not undead creatures. But today, she allowed her battle grace to carry her though, relying more on muscle memory than actual tactics.

When Chrom had asked what their plan was, she had replied with a curt, emotionless, "Take them all down."

Basilio and Flavia seemed to be enjoying themselves, but most of the shepherds looked uneasy. More than once, she had briefly spotted Chrom or Gaius looking at her with concern. It was easy to ignore, especially if she it kept her distance from them.

She yanked a knife out of man's chest, scowling in disgust as blood sprayed her face, and flipped backwards to avoid a lance. The man holding it was promptly killed, but Reflet hadn't moved.

Gaius yanked his arrow out of the lancer's back and held out a hand to his wife.

"We need to talk."

Reflet leveled her sword at his chest. Rage, guilt, and pain coursed through her.

"Out of my way. I have nothing to say to you."

"Stop being a fool. You're gonna get yourself killed, Ref."

She opened her mouth to reply, but before she could, something like heavy steps clanged on the ground behind her. Her head snapped in that direction, but she was frozen in place like a timid doe.

Gaius screamed. "*Move!*" He darted forward, grabbed hold of the armor around her middle, and pulled.

She gasped, and would have landed roughly on the ground had he not pulled her on top of him. The force from their momentum cracked his back against the cobblestones at the same moment the ax embedded itself in the stack of crates behind where Reflet had been standing.

Reflexively, she ripped off one of the daggers lining her arms and threw it with deadly precision, right into the ax-wielder's heart. Then, she slapped Gaius. The resulting sound faded away and left a painful silence hanging the air.

"You're the fool! Haven't I told you to look after yourself?"

He brushed her off, hands raised defensively. "Whoa, I'm fine. Just...help me stand, will you?"

She obliged, and carefully helped him to his feet. Gaius winced the whole way through. "Looks like I messed myself up," he commented.

Reflet picked up her fallen sword and turned away from him.

"Go find Lissa. I need to see how everyone is doing."

Sounds of war cries and dying screams echoed around them. The battle was getting closer to their position. Both of them looked up, eyes wide. Gaius shook his head. "I can't leave you here alone, bubbles."

Reflet glared. "Absolutely not. You are going in that direction to see the healers, and I am going in the other direction to continue this fight."

"How about this: I go with you, and see the battle healer."

Beyond irritated, she raised her sword once more. "Libra has better things to do than attend to fools. You will not follow me."

An exasperated sigh fell from his lips. "Why are you so selfish?"

Reflet's lips puckered and she swung her sword to the side roughly, so that it slid across the stones and made an ugly sound.

"Oh, are we adding 'selfish' to your list of words for me? Right below 'cruel', 'jerk' and 'cold-hearted'?"

"I guess you could, since you'll never admit that you are all those things!"

"Enough!" Her scarf swooshed behind her as she turned on a heel. "We are not having this argument, and certainly not here."

"Anything for my ice princess," the thief muttered before disappearing around the stack of crates. Reflet spared no second glance in his direction. Unbidden, a tiny twinge of guilt pulled at her insides, but she shoved it down. Sure, she wasn't going where she said she was, but neither was he. If she knew him at all, he planned to go the long way around to the battle, then keep an eye on her from a distance.

"Let him worry, then," she thought, and turned her back to the battlefield.

Reflet wasn't even sure where she was going. Her feet moved as if of their own accord, and all she knew was that she needed to get away. At her sides, her fingers *itched* to bury a blade in someone's chest. Angry red lines pounded at the corner of her vision.

Let down your walls, Reflet.

"Show yourself!" she screeched. Her hair whipped in a sudden wind that threatened to blow her away. Ghostly, clawed hands tore at her skin. **"Stop!"**

A brand solidified over her eyes. Everywhere she looked, a foreboding purple design glowed. It gave off waves of terror and hatred. *"Someone help me, please."*

She had felt this before. She'd seen it happening. Oh gods. This was...

How had she stopped it before? What was it that her mother had said?

SUBMIT.

A vehement scream tore her throat. "I *won't!*," she sobbed. Desperate, she searched her memory for the few scraps of happiness it held. A few snatches of her past came up, but the most prevalent thing was Gaius.

"I love you, bubbles. You're my reason for bein' alive."

Gradually, his smile replaced the storm in her head. The purple glow faded from her eyes and she slumped to the ground, lost in a peaceful darkness.

She woke to the sound of unfamiliar voices. Alarmed, she tried to grab for her weapons, but her arms wouldn't move. All she could see was black, and after her previous episode, it scared her. She began to thrash and kick, causing enough problems to whoever was holding her that he removed the cloth over her eyes.

"Calm yourself."

Reflet realized she was slung over the shoulder of a valmese swordmaster. Four more surrounded her, led by a general on a horse. They were all weary looking and bloody. "I can't believe we found their tactician just lying there," one of the men was saying to the general.

"Mila's grace, I suppose," the general replied. He didn't seem to honestly attribute anything to the goddess, though. Most likely he'd report to his superiors when he got home that he'd defeated her in a long, honorable battle.

Reflet groaned. Her whole day was turning out to be one big inconvenience. "Either you all let me go," she began. "Or I will take your lives."

The swordmaster who held her laughed. "We have your weapons. What could you do without them?"

"I am the avatar of an ancient god more powerful than you could comprehend."

He looked her over, his eyes sparkling with mirth. "You tell a good story, girl, but you look more like a lost princess to me," he said, and rubbed a thumb over her circlet. She scowled at his touch.

"Perhaps I am both."

"Oh? Tell me more."

"Alas, my story is not yours to know."

The swordmaster let out a booming laugh that reminded her of Gregor. His blue eyes twinkled. "Of course. I suppose it isn't proper of a princess to give her secrets to the man who kidnapped her."

"It seems I've met with a most chivalrous kidnapper."

"And I a most beautiful god princess."

"Watch your tongue, kidnapper."

"Ah, you have yourself a knight back home, then."

The image of Gaius in armor was too hard to conjure, so she dismissed it. "Husband."

"Too bad for me."

"Do you plan on kidnapping your future wife?"

He laughed again, but before he could reply, the general snapped, "Quiet! We're not out of their sights yet."

Reflet had enjoyed her pointless banter with the swordmaster, but she supposed now was a good a time as any to make her escape. With a whispered "Forgive me" she threw her elbow into his chin. He made a strangled sound and loosed his grip just enough for her to roll off his shoulder.

She hit the ground hard and rolled to her feet. The valmese were all on alert now, and determined not to lose their high profile captive.

"I apologize, men, but I must follow through on my word."

It was incredibly foolish of her. There was no way on earth she could take six armed men, bound and without a weapon.

She kept her body close to the ground and kicked the legs of one of the men. He obviously hadn't expected her to act so quickly, and fell easily. The others raised their guard, but oddly enough, didn't draw their swords.

They couldn't kill her. Whoever wanted her so badly had wanted her alive, and that gave her an advantage, however slim. Her mind raced, analyzing strengths, weaknesses, and...there! None of the men wore an extra burden. Her weapons had to be on the general's horse.

She planned as she moved. Her battle grace returned, moving her fluidly past blows that would debilitate if they connected. Still, she wasn't invincible. A blow caught her temple and sent her spinning to the ground, but she caught herself and mustered the energy to keep moving.

As she fought, the general sat motionless, watching her struggle with a cold eye. Reflet fought with all the strength she had, but it wasn't enough. In the end, one of the men caught her by the waist and shoved her to the ground. Too exhausted to move, she gave up. Her vision swimming, she blinked rapidly and caught sight of the man who was holding her earlier. With a sinking feeling, she realized he hadn't moved the entire time.

"Pick her up," the general commanded, turning his horse back down the road. The other four men moved away, leaving her broken on the ground. Her swordsman picked her up, one hand under her knees, the other under her back. She barely noticed, as unconsciousness was taking her for the second time that day.

***Chapter 2*: all you're gonna see are the ashes**

aln: gunlord500: Thank you for noticing this forlorn little story~it's not as noticed as Chiaroscuro but that's okay I love it all the same. And wow if you thought that was a cliffhanger...I like specifically wrote this story around this cliffhanger. :)

I forgot to mention...this takes place during that first battle after the two year timeskip.

Also many apologies for not naming that OC, and because I seem to have fallen to the...oc children. You'll understand more next chapter.

Thank you to followers and lurkers alike! You're lovely people~

When Reflet awoke, it was to the sound of battle. Her limbs locked in momentary fear, but she soon realized there was no danger, and her breathing slowly calmed.

She lay at the base of a tree, bound and gagged, but she hadn't learned the assassin's trade for nothing. A few minutes later, she ripped the cloth from her face and crawled on her belly through the grass, over to another tree, which stood at the top of a small hill. At the bottom of the hill was the battle she'd heard.

Her noble kidnapper was the first thing she noticed, second was Gaius locked in fierce combat with him. Over the din of battle, she couldn't hear, but her husband was snarling something at his opponent. Around them, the shepherds fought with the group of men who had seen fit to take a sleeping woman from a battlefield.

Reflet huffed. Did they all think she was a prize to be won? That they could dump her off somewhere and the victor got to take her home?

You know Gaius doesn't think that way.

Shoving her subconscious down, the assassin gave one last look at the battlefield, and ran.

As soon as her feet hit the rough cobblestones inside the town, she knew something was off. Where there should have been a bustling marketplace, there was nothing. Litter blew forlornly around the empty square, and all around, she saw frightened faces peeking out shuttered widows.

Of course. The valmese had terrified these people. They had probably been beaten, stolen from, and who knew what else. Valm had to fund its glorious war somehow.

This was where her plans ended. She hadn't wanted to go completely rogue, as her goal was ultimately to end the dragon that had caused her so much misery, and she needed the shepherds' help to do that. For the moment, she was sick of them and their kindness. A momentary reprieve, she thought, would do her good, and in addition would terrify Gaius enough that he would regret his words to her.

Reflet wandered aimlessly about the town, plucking supplies from stalls up and down the streets. Stealing a little more wouldn't matter to people who had already lost so much. Her mind drifted, as it had been, to the fight with Gaius.

She had done something heartless again, it didn't matter what. Ignored one of those orphan children that hung on them, thrown herself blindly at the enemy, spat at Lissa over something trivial, it all blurred together eventually. Apparently, he'd gotten sick of it.

"I don't even know if you try anymore, bubbles. Everyone sees it. You've become...cruel. Cold-hearted. It hurts to see you like that, you know? 'Cuz I know you can be better."

She didn't know what he expected from her. To coddle children? Every time she looked at one, she saw herself, looking up so innocently to the Father that indoctrinated and tortured her. To be friendly and outgoing with everyone? She couldn't look at Lissa without thinking of the twin brother she had known once. Her Father had labeled him as weak. He didn't last long after that.

Instead of telling him all those things, she'd just yelled senseless, hurtful things at him. Not the best plan of action. They slept in separate tents that night for the first time in years, and in the morning acted as if it hadn't happened.

Anger filled her, and she crushed the fruit she was holding. How /dare/ he think he could fix her so easily. Before she could storm off, however, she heard a tiny whimpering noise.

Behind the stall, a little girl was curled up, hugging her knees. She looked up at Reflet with wide, teary, blue eyes.

Reflet shook her head. "Go home to your family, child."

To her horror, the girl began to cry silently, sobs wracking her tiny frame.

"U-um, don't cry. Look, you can come with me okay? We'll find them. Just...stop crying. Please."

In response, the girl wiped her nose on her sleeve, and reached her arms up to Reflet. The tactician balked. In her mind, a tiny version of herself held her shaking arms out to her Father, who ignored her. The symbol on the back of her hand pulsed once, as if angered, then stopped. Had he noticed it, her Father would have been overjoyed.

She slid her fingers down her arm, over the sleeve that covered the back of her hands. "Must I really..." she complained, but regardless picked the child up and settled her on her hip.

"Do you have any idea where your parents are?"

The girl opened her mouth, then closed it again. She dropped her head to Reflet's shoulder. Reflet was amazed. Such a trusting child...then again, weren't all children innately trusting?

Still, something was off about her. She should have said *something* by now. "Hey, are you going to answer me?"

The girl kept her face buried. Reflet decided to move on, and walked the streets of the town, looking for any faces peeking out of the windows that might recognize the little girl in her arms. No one even looked interested.

Infuriated, Reflet pounded on the nearest door. "Hey! I know this kid belongs to someone here! Why aren't you speaking up?"

No one came to the door. The only response she got was a muffled "Go away". Reflet, however, wasn't going to leave without getting the girl somewhere to stay. There were streets upon streets of houses in this town. Granted, most of them were poor in the first place, and even worse off since the invasion, but someone had to have a heart.

"Hey!" she kicked the next door with her foot. "I won't leave until someone answers me!"

If someone within replied, it was lost to the sound of a woman's scream. Reflet whipped her head around, and ran in the direction it had come from as fast as she could, granted that she had a toddler on her hip.

"Ugh...if I never have children, I will be just fine. No offense to you, of course," she huffed. The girl peeked out, her expression unchanged.

Reflet's heart raced as she took the corner too fast and had to slow down. In the end, her pace didn't matter, because someone was already there. The sight of it shocked the assassin and twisted her stomach. Despite her anger over Gaius, she was worried, because not that far from her stood her kidnapper. If he was here, what did that mean for Gaius and the others?

The valmese man stood between a woman, obviously a poor resident of the town, and what looked to be a couple of low-life thugs. Reflet wished she had her bow, so she could swiftly dispatch them and perhaps the kidnapper too.

"What benefit could you possibly gain from antagonizing the people of this town? Leave," he commanded, folding his arms over his chest. The thugs took one look at the very sharp sword hanging at his side, and fled for their lives.

The woman thanked him earnestly. Reflet was about to jog away when she remembered the girl.

"Hey," she called to the woman after running to them. "Do you have any idea whose child this is?"

The swordsman gave her a funny look, but didn't try anything. He stood off to the side, watching as the woman looked the girl up and down. The shy child tried to hide her face in Reflet's hair.

"No, mam. She don't belong to nobody. A while ago, a bad fever spread through the young ones. Most didn't survive. She musta been through a lot to be alive now." The woman gave her a crooked smile. "On these streets, she won't anyway. If nobody taken her in already, nobody will. She's good as-"

"Okay, fine," Reflet cut her off. Ignoring the man, she tried to simply walk away, but he caught up and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"We meet again, princess," he began. "It seems you escaped my ties."

"It is not my fault that you're bad at making knots. Let me go."

"Oh, I haven't any intention of taking you. The valmese got rid of me after they found you gone."

"Oh?" she was dying to ask about Gaius, but kept her mouth shut.

On the horizon, the sun was fading. Reflet struggled to outpace him, to get to a safe place before dark, but she was carrying the girl.

"I met your knight, as well."

She gave him another curt response. The toddler had fallen asleep, and seemed to be growing heavier by the minute.

"I don't understand why you ran off. He obviously cares for you greatly," the swordsman chuckled. "He spat more insults at me than I've ever heard in my life, because I refused to give up your location."

"Why were you so focused on kidnapping me?"

"As a sell-sword, I must be dedicated to my jobs, or else I don't get paid. Sadly, princess, you cost me money, but I don't blame you. I would have done the same thing."

She scowled. "Don't you think, as a man, you wouldn't have *been* in my position?"

"I don't believe it was your looks they wanted you for. You've got a head full of information about their enemy. "

"Hmph. They wouldn't be able to get it from me."

"Oh? Have you been trained to withstand torture?"

"Something like that." She winced.

Before he could reply, they happened on the woods at the edge of town. Reflet laid her sleeping cargo down on the soft grass, and snapped at the swordsman to find firewood. "We may as well stay here tonight. My group won't move on without me, and besides, I'm not done avoiding them."

He obeyed without a word, to her surprise. Before he left, he handed her a spare sword he'd been carrying. "I couldn't save your weapons, but I'll give you this for tonight," he explained.

Soon they had a fire going. Reflet sprawled out next to it on her stomach, and rested her head in her arms. The man sat next to the sleeping child, and gently stroked her hair.

"What are you going to do with her?" he asked.

"I have no idea. I can't just...dump her off, I suppose."

"But you want to."

Anger rose in her gut. He was just like Gaius, accusing her of heartlessness...She made up her mind rather quickly.

"I'm going to keep her."

In the near dark, she couldn't see his expression, but assumed he was confused. "I have something to prove," she asserted.

"Far be it from me to judge someone for their choices. I kidnapped a defenseless woman."

Reflet agreed, and said nothing. For a while, it was quiet, and she had to admit, it was peaceful. It gave her time to stop and think. Her mind was clear, and for the first time in a while, no raspy voices called to her from her head.

"So tell me, princess, why are you avoiding your husband?"

"It's a long story. We got in a stupid fight and I...I regret things I said to him."

"So you'd rather run away than apologize?"

"Sounds like something I would do," she sighed. "When I set out, I wanted to make *him* regret it. Now I think I'm doing the most regretting here."

"I doubt it. He seemed very upset. You're damaged, princess, that much I can tell. But there's an innocent little girl inside of you-much like this one. She's trapped behind the walls you've thrown up, but she's screaming and screaming. 'Save me.' You want to be able to love your husband, but you're afraid to, and instead of handling your problems like a big girl, you run away."

Reflet scowled, but she knew he was right. Why had she had to meet with a kidnapper that dabbled in psychoanalysis?

"Really?" she replied, her voice void of emotion.

"Why else did you save this girl?"

Rather annoyed, but more with herself, she rolled over to face away from him, and muttered a quiet 'Go to sleep'."

The swordsman chuckled softly to himself, and obliged her, curling around the little girl to keep her warm.

Reflet's dreams were strangely happy. She saw herself raising the girl, taking her places, laughing with her, tying up her soft brown hair, dressing her up. *Motherly* things. Gaius was there sometimes too, holding the girl's other hand as they walked. It was odd, how one little dream of one of many possible futures could give hope. Because the swordsman was right, she had saved the girl because she reminded Reflet very much of her younger self, alone and broken.

It made her heart ache.

Reflet had been awoken by so many things in the last day, she was honestly not that surprised this time. The girl was cuddled up into her chest, holding strands of Reflet's hair in her tiny fists.

No, not 'the girl', Reflet corrected herself. A name had come to her last night: Elora. Once, it had been her mother's name. Looking down at her, Reflet felt herself smile. True, genuine happiness filled her for the first time in a very long time.

Not that long ago, she'd said she never wanted children. Yet somehow, this girl had crawled her way into Reflet's heart, and had mended it, even if just a little. Elora's lips pouted, and she shivered, snuggling closer to her adopted pillow.

"Princess, we have a visitor," the swordsman called, breaking her reverie.

Visitor usually meant something bad. In an instant, she was up, softly apologizing to Elora. She left the girl where she was, and hurried to the swordsman's side.

"Stahl?"

The cavalier had his arms raised, staring down the swordsman's blade. "Reflet!" he cried. "Chrom sent me to find you, I've been looking since the sun came up."

The assassin put her palm over the swordsman's hand and pushed it down, getting him to lower the weapon. "What's wrong?"

"It's Gaius..." Stahl breathed. "He...didn't make it out of that battle."

His words froze her to the spot. Her limbs felt as if they'd been filled with lead. Every good thing in her mind suddenly meant nothing. Every defense she'd hastily thrown up over the years came crashing down.

"Did...did you-" she managed to stutter.

"I swear on my honor, princess, he was very much alive when I left him," the swordsman whispered, understanding.

But it didn't matter. It didn't matter who, Reflet wanted *revenge*. She would burn the world down just to find the one man responsible.

She fell to her knees, and an earsplitting scream rent the air.

Back in the shepherd's camp, Chrom nervously paced back and forth, waiting on Stahl. It had been hasty to send him after Reflet, especially since it wasn't likely she would be found.

Lissa suddenly rushed from a nearby tent, the fingers gripping her staff bloody. "Gaius is...he's bad. Really bad. But I...I think we can keep him alive," she huffed.

"gods, If Stahl got that news to her, we're all dead," Chrom mourned. "We will all pay in blood for my mistake."

"Don't be so dramatic, brother. Reflet will be too happy to see him alive to even remember. I think."

It was then that the siblings noticed the commotion in the woods. Stahl emerged, running, and most shockingly, holding a little girl.

"What happened?" Chrom asked as Stahl fell to his knees, panting from the run. But before he could even speak a word, Lissa noticed another figure emerging from the trees.

"Reflet!" both she and Chrom were so eager to tell her of Gaius, they forgot Stahl and ran to the assassin. Stahl yelled after them, but it was too late.

Reflet walked forward like she was either drunk, or insanely tired. She stumbled along through the grass, scaring the other two enough that they kept their distance.

"Ref...let?"

Her arm, all the way up to her shoulder, was covered in something that looked very much like blood. They couldn't see her eyes, because her palm and fingers covered them. The blood was sprayed on her face and caked in her hair as well.

Suddenly, she let out a gritty cackle that sounded nothing like Reflet. The fingers over her eyes snapped apart, revealing a blood red iris.

"I am the fell dragon, Grima."

***Chapter 3*: you are my beautiful, my sweet song**

"No! Leave her alone!" A young boy stumbled across the sparkling ice, his face shadowed under the hood of his cloak. Before him, a woman with dark brown hair raised her sword to protect herself from the ax of a much larger wyvern rider. The weapons met with a clang, the woman crumpled under the combined weight of the beast and its rider-

-and a fire spell shot from the boy's hand smacked into the wyvern's face, sending it reeling backwards, screeching.

"Sister!"

He dropped to a knee at the woman's side, concern written all over his features. "Are you okay? We have to make it out of here, to see Mom again!"

She stared back at him and smiled. It didn't quite reach her pale blue eyes like it used to, but he took it to mean that she was fine. Before anything else could be said, a piercing cry hit their ears. The woman shoved her brother aside, taking the brunt of the wyvern's attack. Its claws raked across her arm, tearing the cloth and ripping bloody gashes in her skin. Despite the pain evident on her face, she made no sound.

The boy went flying across the ice, sliding far away from his sister. His head smacked against the hard surface, and he didn't move. Her heart felt like it would beat out of her chest.

'We're doomed. We made it to the past only to die', was her only thought. It did seem that way, as her sword lay on the ground, too far away to grab before the rider made his move, and the bow slung across her back was useless at such a close range.

The situation reminded her of something her mother had once said. *Even if you believe all hope is lost, Elora, even when you're beaten down and tired and want to give up on yourself, I assure you, there is always something. I won't always be around to be that something, darling. Sometimes you have to find it for yourself.*

She didn't want to say this was the one time she ignored the rare wise words from her Mother, but when a giant, screaming beast is flying at your face, it's astoundingly hard to believe in hope.

Until the impact didn't come. An arrow lodged itself in the Wyvern's eye, and its rider cursed quite loudly. Elora whipped her head around, trying to catch some glimpse of the bowman, but he was already moving, a blur of orange and black heading straight for her.

She gaped and tried to duck away, but it seemed she was not his target. Without so much as a glance in her direction, he slew the fallen beast and engaged its rider, who, with his ax, didn't last long against a sword.

Her savior didn't linger long over his fallen enemy, and scrambled to her side. "Hey, you hurt? Oh, you must be another future kid. Heh, your mom or dad would have my hide if I let you get hurt...So whose kid are you? Your hair vaguely reminds me of stumbles, but hers is lighter brown...I'm never good at this stuff," he rambled on.

Elora felt that she wouldn't say anything if she could. Here was her dead Father, standing before her, just the same as she remembered him. Morgan needed help, but she couldn't stop herself from throwing her arms around his waist.

"H-hey, what's this? Look, kid, I know I saved you, but you don't have to be grateful or anything, it's my job."

There was nothing she wanted more than to communicate to him how much she missed him, but right now, her brother needed him more. She untangled herself and pointed in the direction Morgan had slid, but Gaius only watched her curiously.

"Nobody I know has those those eyes, 'cept maybe Blue, but he's already got two kids! Yeesh. And you'd probably have crazy blue hair..."

If she didn't stop him, this could go on forever, but she wasn't sure if he would understand if she tried to use the hand language Mother had taught her. Then, she realized what could easily convince him. She brushed the hair away from her forehead, revealing the circlet Mother had given her the last time they'd seen each other. Gaius started, stuttering "That belongs to bubbles..."

Sighing, she pointed slowly from herself to him to accentuate her point. Finally, he understood.

"Elora?!"

Hearing her Father speak her name broke her down inside. Tears slid down her cheek. Gaius enveloped her in a hug,

pressing her head to his chest as she sobbed.

"What kinda father am I, not recognizing my own daughter?"

She allowed herself a moment to reminisce, then pulled away in a hurry, remembering her brother. Concerned, Gaius watched her carefully this time, as she pointed again and desperately signed '*brother*' with her hands.

Her original assumptions were right, because Gaius immediately looked sheepish. "Ya know, that looks an awful lot like what we're teaching little Elora. I haven't quite got the hang of it, but that does look familiar..."

Giving up, she decided to just run off in that direction, rather than waste even more time trying to communicate with him. The ice was just as slippery as it looked, and rather hard to fight on. More than once she almost landed flat on her face, but she was determined to make it to Morgan.

"Hey, wait up! There's more enemies around!" Her Father shouted after her. By the sound of his cursing, he was attempting to catch up.

A foreboding screech split the air. An arrow from nowhere barely missed her brother. A group of risen stood together across the ice, their ooze marring the pristine beauty of the landscape. Elora shivered. There was no way the two of them could take so many.

A hand gripped her shoulder. Gaius appeared, out of breath. She half expected him to make a dumb comment on the situation, but instead he yelled, rather loudly, "Chrom!"

She followed his gaze to the other side of the area, where a small group of people appeared, running toward them. If she looked closely, they were all familiar to her. All the people who had raised her, taught her to speak, to fight...all the people who were now dead. It served as a reminder that this was truly not her world. But Morgan was her world now, and she would protect him with her life.

Luckily, she managed to reach him before the Risen could. Elora slipped her arms under his body, shaking from the cold, but couldn't lift him far. Gaius noticed her struggle and gently pushed her away, sliding his own arms under the boy instead.

When Morgan was stable, he shoved her again, harder. "Move!"

They took off toward the shepherds. Elora's heart raced faster and faster as the sound of the undead cries came closer. Whatever happened, it would be close. The Risen had the advantage of several flying mounts.

Elora began to grow weary. Her foot slipped, and she lost her balance. The world span around her as her body hit the hard surface. When she looked up, Gaius had stopped. His expression was torn as he looked from her and back to the rest of the group.

With effort, she thrust her arm out, pointing toward safety. Her voice may have been lost, but her meaning was clear. *Save him.*

"Elora..."

She jerked her arm forward again, telling him to go. Finally, he complied. Elora laid her palms flat against the icy ground and pushed. Her efforts were wasted when a gurgle alerted her to the presence of a risen. Sucking in a breath, she rolled to the side, just barely avoiding an ax. The weapon struck the ground instead, sending shards of ice flying.

Before it could pull the ax back, she scrambled unceremoniously to her feet.

I will not die here.

The ax raised and was swung again, but she ducked under it. The loose cloth of her mother's assassin gear allowed her movements to be lithe and unrestricted. The berserker howled in anger as it's prey avoided him again and again.

It was working, until someone calling her name caused her to look around in panic. The beast saw his opportunity. Luckily, in his blind rage the ax had flipped, and it was only the blunt side that rammed Elora's stomach.

She was sent flying, toward which side she couldn't tell. Her body smacked against the hard ground. Someone yelled her name again. The fringes of her vision turned black, and her energy sucked from her limbs.

Exhausted, she lifted her head. Just on the horizon was the *something* her mother had promised. The original

shepherds, led by Chrom, charged their enemy, fearlessness written in their eyes. On the other side of where Elora lay, the Risen charged forward as well. She was stuck, caught between the two sides that had torn her mother apart.

She wanted to say that time passed slowly, in heartbeats that seemed to last hours, but it didn't. Within seconds, the armies clashed. Strong arms hauled her up just as Chrom's Falchion clanged against an enemy's sword.

A sense of peace and serenity overtook her for the first time in an extremely long time. There would be more work later, but for now she allowed herself to pass from consciousness, not even knowing in exactly whose arms she rested.

Gaius meandered through the camp, sucking on a lollipop. Over his head, the colorful flags waved, and the residents greeted each other cheerily. Overall, it was a lovely day, even considering the slight chill that remained because of their proximity to the north. It was the kind of day Reflet would have used as an excuse to leave her work, and either spend the day napping by a river somewhere, or shopping in town with him.

On those days she had a nearby river, a good book, and a comfortable spot, he would often accompany her, taking with him a packed lunch (admittedly consisting mostly of sweet things) because often she got so wrapped up in her head she forgot to eat.

Such memories of her seemed wrong to think of when compared to the situation now. No one had seen or heard of Reflet or Grima for months. It was driving him absolutely mad.

The appearance of the future children only added a layer of confusion. In their timeline, Reflet had obviously been around for them to have memories of her, but in this one none of the kids would know, especially not Lucina or Morgan.

Inside a tent, all of the children they had met so far were gathered, in addition to Chrom and, oddly, Tharja. Gaius entered, hesitant, and all eyes jumped to him.

"By all means, ignore me. I'm just here to listen," he said, choosing to sit on the ground rather than in a chair.

Lucina seemed to be the one presiding over this assembly, so everyone quickly deferred to her. "I don't know how," she began. "But we must find Reflet, and quickly."

All the children except Morgan suddenly looked very grim. Gaius eyed the small boy who was apparently his son. Morgan's very existence seemed to hang on them finding Reflet. Elora already lived in this timeline but...Even worse, it had been discovered soon after finding him that he remembered no one but Reflet and his sister. He surely had no clue what any of them were talking about.

"How do you propose we do that? They say she turned to Grima," Sully's daughter spoke up.

Tharja took the opportunity to interject. "From what I am aware, her consciousness likely isn't completely lost to the fell dragon. We would know if it were. Darkness, blood, apocalyptic future and whatnot." She waved her hands lazily. "In any case, something is messing with my tracking spell. I would like to get back to fixing it..."

"Go, Tharja," Chrom said, and turned to Lucina. "So nothing like this happened in your future?"

"Not until much later. Um, Elora would know the most about that."

All eyes turned to the silent girl. She looked panicked, and a fatherly urge to help her took over Gaius. "She'll need someone to translate," he spoke up. Elora looked back at him, and their eyes met.

Gaius had been raising the girl Reflet had taken in all those months ago. When given the choice, he'd said that keeping her was what his wife would have wanted. She'd taken an immediate dislike to him, likely because she missed Reflet, but was slowly warming. Libra knew of a language that she could speak with her hands, and was teaching it to her.

The future kids all looked around at each other. "I can do it," Lucina said, taking pity on Morgan, whose face was scrunched up. "I learned as part of my studies. Elora and I were close, until..."

She trailed off. The tent became silent, and Morgan eventually returned to normal, though he still looked sad.

Reflet's daughter looked down at her hands, and began. She moved slowly for Lucina, who seemed to be trying her hardest to keep up.

"My mother raised Morgan and I after our father died. We never knew how, just that one day he didn't come home. After that she dumped us at the castle with Exalt Lissa and the rest of the survivors. All I know after that is when Grima

attacked. It must have been then that she changed, if she is the fell dragon."

Lucina quieted and looked back at her Father. "So it did happen. What should we do now, with your tactician gone? So much is lost."

Gaius watched as Elora's hands moved again. All he caught was *brother*. Lucina's face brightened. "Really? He can?"

"What did she say, Lucina?" Severa snapped, flicking her dark hair behind her.

"She said Morgan has his mother's knowledge of tactics."

Morgan perked up, his orange bangs flying from his eyes and revealing the dark brown iris underneath. "I..."

"Well, do you or don't you?"

He looked torn. "I'm nowhere near as smart as my mother. But if I can help find her, I will."

The rest of the children were quiet, taking in this new information. Some looked determined, others looked unsure. Chrom stood. "For now, we should focus on defeating Walhart. It's what Reflet would have wanted us to do."

The meeting went on for a little while, but no one said anything of importance. Afterward, Gaius ended up outside the tent with his two kids. He looked between them awkwardly, sucking on the candy in his mouth.

"So..."

He gestured to Elora's arm. "You feeling any better?"

Elora nodded, casting her eyes over to her brother. They were the same height, despite her being a few years older. Morgan had his head turned, not looking at either of them.

"What's the matter, kid?"

"I've forgotten everything. I can't even talk to my own sister."

Elora gaped. Her longing expression was so much like Reflet's that it hurt Gaius to think about. Instead, he focused on Morgan.

"Hey, you can learn that again. Don't worry about it."

"It's not just that!" he yelled. "I forgot I even had a father. I mean, of course I must have had one but I just...don't remember you."

Gaius put a hand on his shoulder. "We can work on that."

A few paces away, within earshot of the reunited family, a figure lurked. Grima ran Reflet's long, slender fingers over the circlet around her temples, then down over Reflet's eyes, nose, and lips.

"That girl has our crown, Reflet," he whispered.

"That girl is my daughter."

"How would you feel if we gutted her? If we laid our strong hands around her flimsy neck..."

Grima rambled on, watching the three people. His borrowed eyes shone with an insatiable lust for bloodshed.

"Why won't you allow us to be free, Reflet? Why won't you give in?" he whined.

"As long as my family is alive, I will fight you."

When Grima looked back, the two children had their arms around Gaius. His heart, still Reflet's, clenched.

"Stop it! We do not feel such emotions!"

Grima jerked forward, ready to rise up and slaughter. Visions of their deaths played on a loop in his head. But he was pulled back forcibly, as if an invisible tie bound him.

"No, I won't let you! You made me kill that swordsman. I was weak then, but now my strength is alive, and I will fight you to my death."

Reflet's fingers clenched at unnatural angles. Grima cursed under his breath, fighting back a scream.

"We need a catalyst. Something to drive your consciousness into what you were meant to be. To the darkness you will fall, Reflet."

She was silent.

Months passed. The shepherds defeated Walhart, with the children's help. They said goodbye to Valm and returned to Ylisse to begin their search for the last gemstone. Frederick was to leave for Plegia soon, and the disheartened children hoped for some sign of Reflet.

"If we don't find her, Ylisse will fall, just like in our future..."

Elora collapsed against the wall and breathed out deeply. Lucina was right, but so far they had found nothing. There were whispers, of course, murders here and there, spread all over the world, attributed to a bloodthirsty, human looking deity. But when they arrived at the scene, Grima was always gone.

"Something is stopping Grima from taking over like he did there. Perhaps it's my mother. If it is, that means there's hope, right?" she signed to the princess.

Lucina bit her lip. "There's always hope," she said, but her expression belied her worry.

"What's in that bag?"

"Supplies."

"You're leaving?"

Strangely, Lucina didn't seem surprised, nor did she try to stop her. Elora had always been known for her kindness and smiles, but like Reflet, she didn't take kindly to being told what to do, so she was glad of it.

"I'm coming with you, then. It can be just like old times."

Elora stood and wrapped the princess in what she hoped came off as a parting embrace.

"Oh, you're right," Lucina said, with a strange inflection to her voice. "I have to stay here to protect my parents and the others."

Reflet's daughter stepped back and slung the bag over her shoulder. She signed one last thing to her friend, "Take care of Morgan. Help him understand." before ducking out the window.

Trapped in her own body, Reflet often blacked out his rampages by envisioning scenes from a life that could have been. They were strangely vivid. Perhaps they came from within Grima, who connected her to the future Reflet.

She saw a little girl most often, not hers by blood but loved all the same. Elora never whopped and cheered like the other kids, but her eyes smiled brighter than anyone else's.

"Elooor!" a little orange haired boy tugged on her sleeve. Elora's brown curls bounced as she turned her attention to her brother and caught him up in her arms.

The blue-haired princess walked up as Elora sat the toddler back down. She talked animatedly while Elora replied with her hands, and eventually they ran off together, to join in a game the others had started.

They seemed to be connected in a way Reflet was jealous of.

The vision turned back to Elora, who now was laying face down in the dirt. Owain stood over her, his chubby face apologetic. Reflet felt her heart leap.

Destroy him, baby girl.

The voice that spoke in her ear was more than just motherly instinct. She quashed it, and watched to see what Elora

would do.

She accepted Lucina's hand, stood, brushed dirt from her face, and *smiled*. Owain was rushing to get out his apologies, but Elora quieted him.

"*I forgive you,*" she signed.

"*What an odd thing,*" Reflet thought. "*Forgiveness.*"

"What do you dream of, tactician?"

Hearing her own voice with Grima's inflection was always disconcerting. She didn't answer him.

"Silly things, like forgiveness...But forget that, you will want to watch this."

The light of day was fading, washing the entire scene in an orange glow. Reflet wanted to scream. Up ahead, a young woman dressed in assassin garb wrestled fruitlessly with five plegian men. She was lithe, and obviously trained, but Reflet could see flaws in her movements. Plus, she seemed to be wearing down.

"Don't you recognize your own flesh and blood?"

"*Elora.*"

"Perhaps not. She is, after all, only a broken street rat you took in out of the false kindness of your own heart. Tell us, did you ever truly care about her? Wasn't she just a pawn to prove a point to your husband?"

Reflet had no words. Fear clenched at her heart as she watched the future Elora take a harsh blow to her left arm. The dreadful silence pained her.

"Doesn't that prove that you really have no heart? You fought us all those years ago, just as you fought him. You pushed everyone away. Do you really think those fragile bonds can save you from us now?"

She pushed back against Grima with everything she had. It was hard, because as he said, all she had to go on were memories of fighting and bloodshed. Things that Grima thrived on. Luckily, she had the other Reflet's memories. She concentrated on that, concentrated on hazy recollections of sunny days sitting by the river with Gaius so long ago, and on the reuniting of a tiny, messed up family.

All she could hear was Grima laughing, but all of a sudden her body was hers. The joy of moving with her battle grace washed over her, and within seconds there was blood on her hands.

Red haze flashed around the edges of her vision, but she was too preoccupied with the fact that she was in control to notice. She was a warrior again, ready to kill.

The next few foolishly charged her, and were brought down. Out of the corner of her eye, Reflet saw Elora. The girl was trembling, still holding out her weapon in a shaking hand. Her lips twitched, caught on words she could never vocalize.

Rain began to pour, drenching all of them and causing the blood to sluice off their clothes. Reflet paused, listening for the voice inside her to speak and break the silence in her head. But it never came. She was free. *Free*. She could go back to Gaius and apologize, berate Chrom for being an idiot...

The thoughts made her smile. She swung her sword across the chest of the last man, who'd fallen to his knees begging for mercy. In her haste, she missed the fear in Elora's expression.

Reflet sheathed her sword, and closed her eyes. A sigh of relief escaped her lips, and her whole body finally felt relaxed. But was she really deserving of this freedom? For so many years, she'd allowed Grima to kill and torture innocent people because she was too exhausted to stop him. No, she'd saved the world, hadn't she? If Grima had been allowed to go to Plegia...

Her eyes snapped open. Inches from her face were two watery blue eyes, wide with untamed fear. Reflet's body was twisted over Elora's, her right hand gripping the girl's neck, and her left hand wrapped around a dagger aimed over her heart. Reflet hadn't even realized she'd moved, but here she was, about to kill her own daughter.

"Did you think you could be rid of us so easily?"

a/n: *finally it is done.*

GreenEmeraldGirlxoxo: you really inspired me to actually finish this! Thank you for the kind words, love. Yes AUs and otps are life hehe.

Guest: Thank you very much, dear! I'm all blushy now from all these complements. It's honestly hard to believe they're for me....:)